

Lent is a Season of Grace—

not a season of gloom. We all know that in theory, of course, but gloom does tend to creep in, what with all those terribly severe penances we go in for . . . Gloom is far from any of the books on this page, but we suggest you start Lent with one which is particularly full of that special, enchanting lightheartedness that only comes in the same package with holiness:

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INTEGRITY

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Subject = The Latest Dope

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EDITORIAL



RESISTANCE to evil is a characteristic easier to associate with heroes and heroines of Show Boat dramas than with modern Christians. The "fate worse than death" which we resist is not the encroachment of evil but the danger of being considered wet-blankets, holier-than-thou's, mid-Victorians, or (in theological circles) Jansenists. In the light of current practices it always seems more proper to accord evil a calm demeanor or a sly grin than to create a scene by actually resisting it. We should (according to the code) spare evil-doers any embarrassment until the Last Judgment. The cockle must not only be saved until the harvest, but we should also (according to the code) manure it with the wheat, and shelter it from sun and rain. In such a climate all moral judgments are invariably rash. A thing may be damned for any reason under the sun except sinfulness. Moral struggles are strictly internal affairs which should never under any circumstance break through the skin.

Consequently, in considering television it would be forgiven us if we condemned it for its undoubtedly bad repertoire of mediocre entertainment. We could castigate it and be cheered in the process if we confined our remarks to its unhealthy effects upon the growing child. It will not be forgiven us that we define it as an evil to be resisted. Yet we do so because we feel it is the only point worth making.

There is one other point that may serve to clarify our position: television is immediately attractive and increasingly enchanting; Christianity is not. Christianity is attractive and grows in its attractiveness only when and as long as we quietly think about it. Television is attractive only as long as we think about nothing. The ever-widening void encouraged by television is an open invitation to the seven thousand devils who are abroad these days. This is reason enough for resisting this marvelous new gadget with all our might.

THE EDITORS

Interior Silence

The subject of silence is not a simple one. We can say that silence is a good thing, but unless we add a qualification to that statement we are in danger of oversimplifying. For there can be an evil silence—the silence in the face of injustice which makes us the accomplice of liars and cheats. There can be the silence which is weakness or the silence which is an indication of a mental vacuum. To say that silence is always preferable to sound would be to imply that deaf mutes, far from suffering a handicap, are beings privileged by nature.

But the silence which is a blessing and with which we are concerned is that fruitful silence which allows a man to collect the powers of his soul and respond to the command: Be still and know that I am God.

If we desire to become holy and to attain to union with God Who dwells within us—that intimate union which saints like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross say we have every right to desire, there must come to the soul a great silence. This is the silence which attunes it with the divine harmony, which makes it sensitive to the voice of God. It is an interior silence which can persist even in the midst of much exterior clamor and commotion, a condition which disposes the soul to awareness of God even when His voice would seem faint amid the surrounding discord. This silence of the soul which is a wordless, persistent adoration of God is a lofty state indeed. And how in the midst of our noisy world have we the courage to hope for it?

We could be facetious and suggest some short-cut methods to silence like stuffing our ears with cotton, sabotaging all the telephone wires, or taking up our permanent abode next to the "Silence" sign in the library reading room. But really the problem of attaining to interior silence in the world is capable of solution without resorting to any such drastic measures.

The Uses of Sound

First let us consider a few things about sound. Sound itself is an excellent thing. Our ears, with which we hear noise, and our tongues, with which we make a great deal of it, are good things. As the Scripture says, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear, and a tongue to speak, let him speak." Speech and hearing are wonderful gifts. With our tongue we can spread the glad tidings of the Gospel, communicate with our fellow men, say all the thoughtful, delightful, sympathetic, joyful things which can express our love for God and for one another. With our ears we can hear what

is for our instruction, be edified, consoled, entertained, informed, and we can learn of God as He reveals Himself in the sounds of nature.

The Trappist as it were reserves his powers of hearing and of speech for God alone. There is an exclusive dedication of them. He uses his tongue only to praise God, his ears solely to hear His word. But as lay people our vocation demands that we have temporal interests. Since it is our mission to allow Christ to penetrate all temporal concerns and the things of his spirit to inform the material of our lives, our speech and hearing cannot have the same character of simple concentration. In the course of our day we can legitimately and praiseworthily speak of perhaps fifty different things, and hear about an equal number. It would be a misunderstanding of our vocation to feel that silence is always preferable to speech except on exclusively religious topics.

Sound is a normal accompaniment of our lives. Despite what some of our teachers told us, it is not always bad to make noise. The new-born baby is expected to emit a healthy cry to assure his public that he is making a good start in life. A goodly amount of noise-making is normal with growing children. How one worries when a small boy is sick and lies too still; for a flower may grow well quietly but children never do!

The problem for lay people is not to shut themselves away from sound but to learn to use sound to aid them in the attainment of silence of soul. Like all our other faculties, hearing and speech can be aids to our salvation or agents in our damnation. Like all our other faculties they have to be brought in control of our reason which in turn has to be completely and wholly under the dominion of God. We could make a simple statement that any sound which directly or indirectly raises us to God is good for us, any sound which distracts us from God or the things of our vocation is bad for us.

We are so constituted by God that our lower faculties are to assist us in the use of the higher. We can use them aright so that they do this, or we can misuse and pervert them so that they hinder the activity of our higher faculties. For instance, unless we eat to sustain our physical life we can't go on thinking for long, for proper eating facilitates our intellectual processes. But if we overeat and overindulge in drink we stifle our thinking.

Similarly with the sounds around us. If they interfere with our thinking (like the radio "which is so loud that I can't hear myself think") they are bad for us. If they stimulate and move us to intellectual activity they are good. We can will to have so

much noise around us that we never operate above the sense level, or we can use sound to help us upward, from the sense level to the intellectual, to the things of God. The best music, for instance, does not move us merely sensibly; if it is truly great it has more than a sensuous appeal: it can profoundly influence our spirit. That is not expecting too much of it, for we are creatures with immortal souls and sound should affect us differently from what it would an animal. That is why to be moved to pray at a concert can be more than a matter of emotion.

Making Way for Silence

But though sound is good, today we are surfeited with noise. Our stomachs would burst if they were given half the amount of material offered to our ears. We are surrounded by such a conglomeration of noises that it is difficult to sort out what is good and what will help us to "the one thing necessary." Unfortunately most of us do not have the simple wisdom of Melanie, the little child of LaSalette, who said she didn't want to go to school because there was so much noise "and I am afraid my heart might hear it."

The recognition on our part of the necessity of guarding our hearts from the noise and tumult around us would be the first step in developing that interior silence which allows God to speak. Some of us really make it difficult for God to do that: we surround ourselves voluntarily with so much noise that our speech with God is about as successful as a conversation carried on along Third Avenue while the El is roaring overhead.

If we are ever to attain to interior silence we have to shun unnecessary noise and learn to mortify our senses. This isn't always an easy thing for us to do: we may not mind at all switching off the radio when Gabriel Heatter is on, but it may be a real mortification to turn off the ten top tunes of the week. It is well to remind ourselves that this mortification of our ears, if it is to be effective, has to extend beyond a turning away from what is in itself sinful. There are some things that are never suited to the ears of a Christian. If we are to attain to interior silence we have to practice turning off (or mentally turning away from) those sounds which although they may be good in themselves needlessly influence our minds and our hearts because they over-occupy our ears. Such can be lengthy conversation with our families and friends which prevent us from engaging in a more excellent conversation with God. There is a danger for those of us who lament the fact that we are deprived of exterior silence, that, nevertheless, we become so used to incessant sound that we don't know what to

do when we are faced with a time of quiet. Lay apostles become so busily engaged in helping people that when they do have a free evening they immediately plan to occupy the time in seeing someone. They don't recognize the opportunity for silence when it is offered to them.

We have to bear in mind that as we are we can't carry on two conversations at once. The saint of course can converse with men without interrupting his communion with God. But until God has established us in a silent stability of soul which prevents exterior happenings from greatly distracting us, we shall have to make valiant efforts to prevent the sounds around us from taking over our thoughts and deafening us to His voice.

Mortification of our hearing and our speech (how many times every day do we talk completely without necessity!) is not sufficient however unless we mortify our other senses. The interior of our souls can still be pretty noisy, even when by nature we are lovers of silence, if we allow ourselves always to satisfy our curiosity, see and read everything we want, and allow our imagination to run away with us. There is nothing more disastrous to interior silence than the clatter of a noisy imagination. That is why we can't day-dream to our heart's content and still keep our souls in a state of readiness for communion with God.

Another thing we have to guard against (something which at first looks as if it is presented by an angel of light) is excessive disquietude at the evil in the world. Certainly it is good to lament the sins and unchristianity of our day and to work wholeheartedly to overcome them, but the kind of disquietude which occupies our minds, prevents us from praying and distracts us from God (Who alone can remedy the evil in the world anyway) is an aid to the Devil in robbing us of interior silence.

Lastly, we should put aside some time during the day when we can be alone and have at least some measure of exterior silence. It is ideal if this can be at the beginning of the day at Mass (perhaps with the priceless addition of some time before or afterwards), but for some of us this may be impossible. Then we have to search our day and see when we can find the time—perhaps at night before we retire, or in the afternoon while the children are taking their naps, or while we are driving home from work. The point is we have to scrutinize our day, recognize our opportunities and make the most of them. If we're kept waiting for fifteen minutes we can grab a magazine and distract ourselves, or we can use the time as a time of fruitful silence.

Exterior Silence

This idea of using silence immediately brings us to another consideration. Exterior silence should be a big help, but it becomes one only if we have within ourselves the resources to use it well. For instance, walking alone through a quiet snow-covered village should be more conducive to meditating on the Nativity than pushing one's way through Times Square. But in the quiet country village it is possible to be thinking impure thoughts, plotting a murder or idly day-dreaming.

Exterior silence if it is to be good must not be mere emptiness. Suppose we were to take someone who is used to constant noise, a steady-going radio, and ceaseless chatter, and suddenly by force transport that person into an atmosphere of utter quiet. Could we justly expect him to adjust immediately to the silence and make the most of it? Or would we be placing him in the position of the man in the Gospel story, from whom the Devils were cast out, who returned to find his house "swept and garnished" and *empty,* and who because he couldn't stand the emptiness went out and got seven other spirits more wicked than himself to fill it?

Exterior silence is good if we can make it fruitful by filling it. It can't be a negation, a lack of purposeful activity, for if it is to be good it must be the occasion for careful pondering of the vital things of life and the opportunity for more exclusive attention to God. It will be that only if we are well-prepared to use it. If we are ill-prepared, melancholy rather than meditation may result. We can see that in the case of the father and mother of a big family. As the children grow up, and one by one leave, the bustling household becomes quiet, the parents are faced with sudden silence and solitude; unless they have prepared themselves to adjust to their new condition and benefit by it, they may find themselves sitting around gloomily bemoaning their lot. A parallel example can be seen in the life of a girl who always has had constant companionship at school and at work, who when she marries finds herself alone the greater part of the time while her husband is working. She can use the time (especially in the first year of her marriage when there are no babies to fill it) to grow spiritually and mature in every way, or it can become for her the occasion of discontent, loneliness, depression, and vicarious adventure with the day-time serials.

For someone who is prepared to be alone with God, spending several days in private retreat is sheer joy; for a person who has never given any thought to the things of God it might be sheer torture, or at least a waste of time. The point is we shall never

discover the joys of silence and solitude unless we prepare for them. It is this preparation—which we could call "filling the silence" which we should consider next.

Making Silence Fruitful

The most obvious preparation for making silence fruitful, I think, is spiritual reading. It is evident that what we read makes up in large part our mental atmosphere. I can remember while I was still a child reading the murder mysteries which ran in the *Saturday Evening Post.* As week by week I waited for the next installment I pondered the intricacies of *Murder in Mesopotamia.* The stage for my solitary moments was all set.

In our moments alone we all carry on a conversation with ourselves. The thing is to provide suitable material for those conversations. Spiritual reading will certainly go a long way in doing it. It should prepare us in our silent moments to ponder within ourselves the things of God, and ultimately prepare us to converse with God. The final fruit of our silence we hope will be, after years of meditation and prayer, the almost continual communion with God which returns to Him always whatever the thought, whatever the moment, whatever the work which occupies us. Spiritual reading may well be the seed to bear fruit in such contemplation.

However, we have to make a point of reading well and carefully, and of not letting the matter end at that. We have to recall the thoughts we read to our minds from time to time, and especially we have to use them as material for meditation and prayer, and not as something for purely intellectual speculation. In other words we have to talk them over with God. For our spiritual reading to be fruitful it must promote intimacy with God, and not serve merely to improve our minds.

Another thing is that during our time of silent prayer we have to be careful lest we become so occupied with our own thoughts (no matter how lofty, how "spiritual" they are) that we are never in readiness to listen to God. As Our Lord told Sister Mary of the Holy Trinity, He speaks to every soul. Some of us just don't bother listening however. We can shut our ears to Him in any number of ways—some of them quite subtle. For instance, I would be doing it if during the time I am in church I am completely preoccupied in mulling over thoughts on the subject of "Silence" (a very spiritual subject indeed!) and never pay any heed to Our Lord at all.

Schooling ourselves by spiritual reading and meditation should prepare us for the silence of love, provided—and this is

important—we prepare ourselves for it by leading our daily life well. Any method of attaining interior silence which disregards our everyday activity should be suspect. Consider it this way: let us take the ordinary, rather worldly person who is attached to the things of this earth even though he may recognize their dangers. Can we expect him suddenly to embark on the practices of the contemplative life unless he first makes his daily, exterior life Christian? It seems to me we should be jumping over an important step in normal spiritual development if we do. That is not to imply, of course, that we omit praying until our active life is completely above reproach from the Christian point of view; but it does mean that we learn to lead our daily life well; that we see the place of our work, our ordinary activity and our service to our neighbor, in purging us and clearing away the noise of sin in our souls to make way for the silence which is of God. In other words, a good active life is an excellent preparation for the contemplative life. The practice of the moral virtues should perfect our souls and make us capable of responding to the Spirit of God. Loving service of our neighbor should open our hearts to His Love.

How to Use Unpleasant Noises

A common difficulty for lay people is learning to use unpleasant noises which they can't do anything to stop. These are noises which, because of their vocation, they can't flee; they are compelled to live among them and work with them. What can be done to make them an aid to an interior life rather than a hindrance?

Saint Therese has given us the example of how to use the distracting clatter of rosary beads, but what about the noises of the factory or office, the blaring sound of our neighbor's television set, the racket of buses and trucks going by our door at all hours of the day and night? There is, of course, the comforting fact that, because man is an extremely adaptable creature, we can become so used to habitual sounds that we are scarcely aware of them and they need not distract us. But the noises of which we are too painfully aware can be used to help us spiritually by our recognizing their value in mortifying our senses. The pain they cause our ears can be used to help heal our souls.

A Young Christian Worker told me that she came home from the factory every night with the noises of the machines still ringing in her ears, and even as she fell asleep she still heard them. The only way she could think of to use them was as a penance; to offer them to God as her willing part in the redemption of the workers.

There is another fact which should console those of us who sincerely desire to maintain the interior silence which permits God to speak; that is, "that for those who love God all things work together unto good." This is a truth which we should bear in mind the more we grow in intimacy with God, the more we are drawn to desire prayerful solitude with Him, the more we find it painful to take our place amid the clamor of the world. If we really love God, if we really desire to do His Will, we need have no fear that in following our vocation in the world, the commotion of the world will separate us from Him. He can make every thing serve His glory and help to increase His love in our souls.

The important thing is that we should be always at the beck and call of His Will. If we are, we shall discover that He will use everything to sanctify us, that He will communicate Himself to us while we are serving our neighbor amid noise, as well as when we are praying to Him in silence. It would be false to think that we could grow in intimacy with Him by wilfully (and out of self-love) prolonging our prayer, when we have a clear indication that He wills us to be out doing our work and loving Him in our neighbor.

The person who really has attained to interior silence knows that God speaks everywhere. His voice is not restricted by time or place; His message is not drowned out by exterior clamor and confusion. In the soul who loves Him He makes Himself known, silently, sweetly, in the obscurity of faith and of fervent hope. And such a soul is ready to take something of His presence, and His silence, and His stability into our noisy, disheartening world.

DOROTHY DOHEN



A WHIRL WITH BERLE

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About Television

There seems to be a law of diminishing resistance, whereby people corrupt easier and quicker as progressive barriers come down. For instance if someone were to institute nude bathing, I would be surprised to find much general disapproval. Certainly nothing to compare with the hullabaloo said to have been aroused when women's skirts were originally raised above the ankles. Or remember all those years of discussion, disapproval and hand-wringing about "necking"? Sexual immorality has now reached the stage of wifely infidelity and homosexuality, but the public does not burst spontaneously into righteous alarm. Its moral sensitivity has been so blunted that the nicest people merely cluck over dispassionate socialized statistics of depravity.

To my mind this law of our own deterioration explains why the curious institution of television has moved into millions of American homes without perceptible friction on the part of the householders, why de luxe sets were dangled without misgiving before the chance-takers at church bazaars. After George Orwell's "1984" one would expect people to have premonitions of Big Brother every time a picture flashed on their screen. But no. People had neither shame nor fear in purchasing their sets.

Even now as I write I can imagine my readers being astonished at my audacity in presuming to criticize television. I can hear them say, "This is too much!" Now *Integrity* is going overboard! This surely is Jansenism! How negative can you get?" Perhaps they will even be wondering what anyone could say against television except perhaps to criticize the décolleté of its female stars.

This is not a diatribe against television. It is a weighing of its value in the light of social circumstance. It is a closer look at the television clichés. The perspective may be new in places, but the originality of this article consists mostly in calling nonsense by its true name. The wife of a drunkard would not think of setting up a well-stocked bar preliminary to putting her husband on rations. Yet a million mothers of small children seem to think the key to rationing their offspring's televiewing is to buy a set of their own.

This criticism of television may be unpopular but it is extremely easy to make. In its order television is just about as obviously harmful as nude bathing is in its order. True, the morality is not so clear cut, but that does not mean that the consequences cannot be even more disastrous.

Television's Family Tree

Let us trace the genealogy of television in the hope of discovering whether it is a little monster or a little prodigy. On its father's side it is the child of technology, grandchild of capitalism. On its mother's side it was conceived in the womb of despair, ignorance and dehumanization.

First then as to the siring of television. This can be made clearer by contrast with radio. When radio was invented, by the chance discovery of a scientific genius, people thought it a clever toy. No one thought of *using* it with any universality until it was discovered that it could be turned into an instrument of money-making through commercially-sponsored programs. So radio belongs to the capitalistic era, where the final criterion is profit, even though it is in itself technologically wonderful. Capitalism and technology are accomplices anyhow, and the eras of their respective supremacy are not always easy to separate. We know however that we have passed through an age in which money was the be-all and end-all, and that during this time big business men even suppressed the use of inventions which were to the common good, if they threatened financial disaster to existing companies. Most people sense that we are now entering another period in which the finality belongs to technological perfection and scientific progress. We *have* to have jet-propelled airplanes, just because men can invent and make them and not because anyone is really in that much of a hurry. Once we get them we can justify them as being useful in war, but since the enemy has them too, the result is only a speedier version of the same deadly fight. We had to have atomic power for the same reason. Here the huge expense was more clearly related to warfare (modern warfare has it own causal affinities with technology, just as previous wars had with capitalism, but that is not the subject of this article), as it is doubtful if Americans would have allowed the government to spend the money without that excuse, but it was in the cards even if there had been a delay.

It seems to me that television belongs more to this technological orientation than to capitalism. It was deliberately developed by huge teams of technicians to bring to perfection all the potentialities of the radio-type instrument. If sound can be brought into people's living rooms, why not pictures? And if pictures, why not colored pictures? And if the process works one direction, why shouldn't it work backwards, bringing the sights and sounds of the living room to a central police bureau? But maybe that isn't scientifically possible, and we will not have the

that the power of *thinking,* the contact of the mind with reality, is virtually suspended through not being able to intrude on the person's attention.

Anything that magnifies or enchants the senses can be turned to this illegitimate use. Music can purify the emotions and subserve the intellect and the spirit, as good music does, or it can be like a siren, enslaving the higher faculties. A play or movie can give a deeper understanding of life, catharize the emotions and lift up the spirit, or it can deaden a man's discouragement by removing him from reality for a couple of hours. The contradiction that exists in the movie industry today is really because people want two mutually exclusive things from cinema-going. The critics and the moralists and the artists want the movies to show great pictures to stir the souls of men. But the masses of routine, undiscriminating movie-goers are without realizing it in search of oblivion. They want a lot of pictures which are mildly distracting and titillating, but they don't want to be lifted up, awakened and ennobled. They want stupor and their mass inertia makes a powerful impact on the heads of movie companies, who are New York financiers who care neither for art nor stupor, but only for money. The point about the movies is that they can be used as a narcotic, and because many people have used them this way the production of pictures has been profoundly influenced. As a result the routine production of Hollywood can be classed as dope.

Similarly radio is more in the nature of a narcotic than movies (and is so used by the millions of soap opera fans), but is less powerful because it has only an auditory appeal. Television has all the power of sound and sight, along with the advantage of being in the home and available at all waking hours. It is a "natural" for spiritual narcosis and in fact it fell at the psychological moment right into that opening that the decay of modern society provided.

Several other characteristics of narcotics have their parallel in television. Everyone knows that the Chinese opium smoker, seemingly so quiet and lifeless in his "den," is really having roseate dreams. Dope fires the imagination, greatly stimulating the natural power of day-dreaming. Some narcotics overwhelm the imagination so powerfully that the addicts commit crimes under their influence. So it is with television, especially with respect to children, who have nightmares, who cannot study, and to whom the real world looks endlessly prosaic by contrast with the television screen. The adolescent is also very much influenced, as he is also by the movies. He, or more likely she, imagines and

desperately longs for the glamorous life brought in on the television screen. Nobody will deny that the standard of values actually reflected by television is incredibly base (to wear immodest clothes, to go to the Stork Club every night, is to live in a world of irresistible glamor), but few people realize that television is much better able to portray this false world than sound ideals of morality or sanctity. Spiritual goodness looks like folly to the worldly-minded, to those who have not passed through an asceticism of the senses. But even so it is more faithfully portrayed by books, which convey ideas, than by pictures.

Finally, narcotics are habit-forming, and so is television. Anyone who wants to hold that television is just a clever invention, useful for entertainment or education, will be hard put to explain why the usual television owner is drawn daily to his screen as the drug-addict is to his hypodermic needle. Why is it that Americans as a body virtually have abandoned the most elementary rules of hospitality and courtesy, and follow a pattern of beckoning their guests into a darkened room, there to ignore them for the rest of the evening. These same people would willingly put aside something which was merely pleasant. They would not turn away the Joneses because they had planned to go to bed early that night. "Pardon us if we don't ask you in, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, but Helen and I are pretty tired and we thought we'd go to bed early tonight." "Oh, it's you, Mr. Jones! How nice of you to come over. I'm sorry I won't be able to talk to you, as I'm in the middle of a very interesting book." Of course no one would say these things. But the compulsive-drinker won't stop getting drunk for the Joneses' sake and neither will the television addict abandon his screen. "My father is turning into a vegetable," one of our friends said. "He just sits watching that screen every night." A visit to the dens of Chinatown, if they still have any, or to those of Harlem, would reveal men and women in a parallel stupor.

It is because dope is habit-forming that money is no consideration. Narcotics are expensive and the money is always forthcoming, even if it has to be got by theft. So far as I know, no one steals to buy a television set, but certainly the majority of television sets cost out of all proportion to what families can afford. Mrs. Smith may not have been able to save enough money for a new dress (at $20), but she has to have television (at $200). Mr. Smith may be already heavily in debt, but he will get a set on time payments. Neither of the Smiths would have acted so imprudently in the purchase of a house or in getting money to

educate their children. These last are desirable things, but not accompanied by a compulsive drive that overrides reason.

The Morality of Television

We have tried to show that television is by its nature an opiate, and if this is granted it follows that television is in about the same moral position as morphine, that is, dangerous for general usage. Of course you cannot press these comparisons too far, and here the comparison breaks down. You can say that morphine is good when used medically as an opiate under appropriate conditions. You cannot say that television is ever good as an opiate because whereas it is good sometimes to dull bodily pain by stupor, the pain of the soul is best relieved in other ways, by prayer, consolation, absolution, music, hope, humor or distractions of an innocent and non-habit-forming nature.

The whole evaluation of television centers around this question of its nature. The argument is between those who hold, as we do, that television is an opiate and therefore essentially bad (though accidentally and occasionally it may have a good program of a stimulating nature—to be essentially bad doesn't mean to be totally bad), and those who hold that television is a neutral instrument which can be turned to good or bad uses.

In making our judgment we consider television to be a certain combination of men, materials, money, talent and machines working together for a common end. For want of a better word we would call television an institution. Its nature, its essence is determined by the chief reason for the collaboration of all the diverse elements involved. Is this the desire to spread truth? Obviously not. Is it avarice? That is the personal motive of many of the people involved, perhaps the majority, but there are gross, uneconomical or extra-economical factors involved in television. Is it technological perfection then? Technology is the inclined platform down which television is rolling, but in itself it is a mechanical impetus, sub-human, and therefore an insufficient explanation. The need for dope in a dehumanized society is a better explanation. This is the human situation that provided the inertia which is the major reason for television's growth. The promotors more or less unconsciously corresponded with the inarticulate demand.

Those who hold the "neutral" view regard television as a material gadget, a little box in the living room capable of wonderful things. But looking at television from this narrow material

viewpoint you fail to account for most things about it. You cannot even explain how it got in everyone's living room.

This same difference in ways of judging modern society divides Catholics on a whole series of issues, including rhythm, industrialism and advertising. Our opponents are always divesting the subject under consideration of its meaning before examining its morality. They break rhythm down into isolated acts and omissions to no one of which can be attributed the sustained purpose of not having children. That purpose belongs to the series of acts and omissions, considered as a series. Similarly, industrialism becomes machinery, rather than a particular *arrangement* of men and machines whereby the former is subordinated to the latter.

We are trying to discern the ordering principles of the configurations of society. It is not so much the *matter* of society that is undergoing change as it is the *arrangement* of the elements of society. And it is this ordering which has to be judged if we are going to prevent a bad order's being superseded by a worse one. As long as we decline to tangle with these essences and orders we will find a way to justify every new maneuver of the atheist synthesis, until the day that we wake up to find ourselves strangled.

* * *

Let us now approach the subject of television from other directions, taking as our springboard the usual arguments in favor of its use or reform.

The "Ground Floor" Argument

One hears it said that we Catholics must make haste to get into television on the ground floor, as we failed to do in radio. The supposition is that television is a powerful instrument of communication just standing there waiting for whoever is alert and clever enough to turn it to his own uses. It is assumed that, if television ends up making people more pagan instead of more Christian, the world will have been lost by default on our part. It is maintained that this is what happened with radio. Why, right now the Catholics can have any amount of time on television, if they will only take the trouble, etc.

Now if two men have very different purposes, even clashing ones, their sporadic co-operation is going to be an uneasy one. It's the same way with institutions. Let us take the case of radio, where the case is more clear-cut than with television because more in retrospect (although the case is probably even stronger with television). Radio as an institution has as its consuming interest

the making of money. The Church's consuming interest is the salvation of souls. These two ends are unrelated, if not inimical to each other. The meeting point of the Church and radio is that radio-waves are considered to be in the public domain, so falling under federal regulation. Stations are expected to make a gesture at least of public service, which includes giving some air-time to religion. They were happier to do this in the early days when sponsors were scarce. Now they are trying to crowd the religious programs out. The working partnership of religion and radio will continue to be artificially sustained, but their tendency to destroy each other will also continue to exist under surface politeness.

What is true of radio is even more true of television. The programs on television are still under the auspices of the advertising business, even though their audience wants not so much now to be entertained as to be kept from thinking. Anyone who seriously tries to make a general secular program thought-provoking will be working against the grain. People do not look to their opiates for activation. Personally I don't think there is much hope of "cleaning up" television programs from within either. Anyone who removed the off-color stories and the V-necklines from television programs would be working against the best interests (that is the financial interests) of the sponsors, and so against his own professional advancement. Recent history shows that outside censorship, or the threat thereof, is a much more effective controlling factor.

Where we have failed in radio to a certain extent, and may fail in television, is in not making the best possible use of the time extended us through the courtesy of the stations under the pressure of the Federal Communications Commission. These little opportunities do not belie the fact that the orientation of radio is to money, television to narcosis, but show that there are small free areas reserved to the common good. We cannot hope in such isolated instances to outweigh or nullify the effect of the institutions as a whole, but we ought to make the most of what opportunity offers. The mistake to which we are tempted is that of watering down our message to mediocrity or secularism, in imitation of the general error of all mass-media.

The Opportunistic Argument

Back of many people's desire to make the best apostolic use of television possible, is an unconscious assumption that providence's designs will fit into man's master plans. We have a

marvelous instrument of communication. It must follow that God plans to use it, with our help, to spread the Gospel. Why does it follow? Maybe He plans it and maybe He doesn't. But generally speaking no one ever questions this axiom. It is automatically assumed that His ways are our ways. Once that assumption is made it follows as a corollary that we should strive to maneuver ourselves into "positions of influence," which means into the key positions for blaring forth the world's wisdom.

But let us examine the premise. God has specifically revealed to us that His ways are not our ways, and that furthermore His will generally manifests itself as a sign of contradiction to us. God, picking out a *spokesman* for Israel, chose a man who stuttered—Moses. Looking for someone to help along the missions, He singled out a sheltered young daughter of the French *bourgeoisie,* and then he put her in a cloistered convent in Lisieux. Our Lady wishing to communicate an important message to the human race chose a cloistered nun, a handful of children here and another handful there, making sure that the places were remote and inaccessible. To channel His message and the royal ancestry of Our Lord through His chosen people God used the branch that was exiled in Babylon and had to find its way back after many years, rather than those who remained in Palestine. If we take these and a thousand like examples into consideration, we will not be over-anxious about television. We will not feel that if we miss our chance here, God will be in a dilemma. Rather we should remind ourselves that God seems to have a predilection for foolish and unlikely instruments. We ought not to be surprised if He disregards the airplane and sends a crippled envoy around in a wheel chair. We should be prepared for Him to bypass television and radio, commentators, dictators and statesmen to single out, for instance, some unknown Finlander who speaks none other than his native language and communicates with the world by letter.

No one can understand God and we should perhaps be as presumptuous to exclude television as others are unconsciously presumptuous in assuming God will use it. Nevertheless there is one other thing which needs saying against the fittingness of television. Chesterton long ago pointed out that there is an inverse ratio between what contemporary men have to say and their power to say it. I doubt this ironical fact is mere chance. It is common experience that the more important one's message, the less need it has of artificial means of transmission. News of a good and important product passes rapidly from housewife to

housewife, whereas bad and unnecessary stuff needs wide advertising. What saints have to say can be lost in a trunk for one hundred years or published obscurely and unattractively by a mediocre press in some remote corner—and sell a million copies. God's birth in Bethlehem had no fanfare, nor was it needed. His death on Calvary was hardly heeded by the Roman Empire. Yet it transformed the world. Holy men and women run away from the world, and the world beats a path to their door. Father Lombardi reaches and transforms hundreds of thousands of people, not because he uses radio or television, but because he spends five hours a day in prayer and practices heroic poverty—so having something to say.

We seem to have forgotten that holiness has a power of attraction unlike anything on earth. If we were preoccupied as Catholics with learning and living the truth and with doing what needs doing in the apostolate, we could forget about whether or not the world would know. In fact we would have to spend our time fighting off publicists. Many of us have become so preoccupied with how our good deeds will come to the attention of the general public that we can't concentrate on making these good deeds heroic acts of charity. We are so concerned to reach a nation-wide audience that what we have to say turns not not to be very exciting.

In other words, if we were better we wouldn't need television, the ordinary means of communication would be quite sufficient. It is only when men have little or nothing to say that they have to shout and vivify it. Radio and television bear witness to the world's emptiness. What are these things to us?

Yet the Holy Father uses radio and television and so can we legitimately use it when the occasion arises. But that does not mean we should put our hope in these things or unconsciously assume that God depends on them. It ought not to bother us if radio, television, airplanes and atomic power were wiped out tomorrow. God does not need them. A world tyrant certainly does. It would be very unfortunate if Catholics would fight to sustain the props of a coming world dictatorship, just because now and again these things have served to get a priest to a dying Eskimo or to bring the Pope's voice halfway around the world. Let us rather use these things as though we used them not.

The Culture and Education Argument

If radio had been just an invention and not a vehicle of the advertisers ordained to the end of making money, it would have been very useful as a tool of adult education. It could have taught

people French at home. Housewives could have listened to the reading of great books while they did their ironing. The municipal station in New York, WNYC, is rather like this, and far the best station in the country to my mind. But radio has failed ingloriously to fulfill its educational potentialities.

There are some people who do not agree that radio missed the boat here. Their attitude is well reflected in the public statements of the late Walter Damrosch, and centers around music. He said:

> I do not have to tell you of the miracle that radio has worked in this country. The results have been awe-inspiring. Beethoven and Bach as well as Wagner and Verdi have brought their music into the humblest and remotest dwellings.

Well there is some truth in this, and it is to the credit of the better radio stations that they have sustained symphony orchestras through a sense of public responsibility. Nevertheless the audience for serious music remains small, although of an elite nature. Nor is this accomplishment wholly a good thing.

Most people are confused about music. They think that because it is serious it must be good, which is like thinking that the *New York Times* must be a good paper because it is so hard to read. A lot of modern serious music is discordant, offensive to the ears, and violates the "right reason" that there should be in music.

Many so-called music lovers are really idolators. Their emotions are profoundly moved by music and they mistake this for religious fervor. "*Music* is my religion," one hears them say. This is an idolatry that Walter Damrosch shared. Listen to him:

> Realizing the joys that music can bring to men, I have done my utmost to spread its gospel. Today as never before the world stands in need of music. The machine age, with its opportunities for increased leisure, demands means of employing that leisure to advantage. Healthful sports are necessary but so also is something that will satisfy the spiritual craving. Music fulfills this desire.

Let the culture-vultures rejoice in their music. The ordinary housewife and working man who would have a desire for intellectual self-improvement if they were in normal circumstances need a profound spiritual reconstruction. And this, I believe,

radio (with television) is quite unable to give them. A particularly good sermon will strike home to a few, but what people need especially is to shed their own *passivity.* Five housewives who form a group to discuss their common problems along the see-judge-act lines are beginning to capture the initiative in their own lives. Radio and television cannot give them this sense of community and responsibility, and all the brains and talent in the world cannot compensate for its absence.

It's Here to Stay

I've heard this said ("It's here to stay") about television in France, where it's just beginning to come in and therefore not "here" yet. I've also heard it said about industrialism under similar circumstances. And of course about industrialism in America. What people mean really is that television and industrialism and etcetera are inevitable and irresistible. Now if there is one thing that's here to stay in that same sense, it's artificial birth control.

Let Catholics dwell on that for a while, and they will see that there are some pressures which must be resisted even when they seem overwhelming.

As a matter of fact much of the power of the militant atheists today consists in nourishing a general belief that it would be useless to oppose them. In this way they often persuade people to lay down their arms before the attack is made. Or at least people are persuaded to make a bad peace with the new conditions. Industrialism is a very sad example. It has had the effect of dehumanizing people and destroying the vocational and creative nature of their work. Seeing this, nearly everyone is willing to accept industrialism and the world which it brings in its wake. Most Catholic leaders have also thrown in the glove, which is odd because it means that they have acquiesced to a world order which isn't the one God ordained. They think thereby to conserve their energy to compensate for the evil in accidental ways—like Walter Damrosch and his music. But instead they find themselves having to capitulate to a whole series of innovations. Television is one of these. Its hypnotic effect on people is partly the result of their dehumanized work-lives. Under the circumstances it is probably rightly thought that an all-out battle against the television soporific is liable to be a losing one. But in so far as it is a losing effort, so much the more inevitable and horrible will be the internal collapse that this entire unnatural order is building up for itself.

What Shall We Do About Television?

When we ask this question we must realize that there is a sense in which it is meaningless. We don't own television so we are not in a position to dispose of it. People who ask, in a similar vein, "What shall we do about industrialism?" make the same unconscious mistake. They feel they ought to find an answer that would be useful if they owned all the factories—a master plan for transforming or reducing industry. It is from this false start that the ambition arises, on the part of lay apostles no less than, even if later than, on the part of the communists, to *get control* of industrialism, so that they can put the master plan into effect. What will the communists do with industrialism when they take over? Canonize it, use it to sustain their power and to enforce their own odd idea of beatitude, a materialistic paradise. What will lay apostles do with industrialism? Either they don't know yet, or they think they will decentralize and humanize manufacture, not realizing that it will then be too late.

Christianity doesn't have to get control of the world before it can start operating. It works the other way around, planting seeds, spreading charity, teaching and contradicting the world in little ways until it grows and fills the earth (allowing for set backs from the powers of darkness). Christian social action should do likewise. If the plan can't begin now but must wait until it gets power, control and ownership, we ought to regard it with great suspicion.

It would be better to ask, "What shall we do *in the face* of television?" Then the answer is easy: RESIST IT.

As apostles we are in a position to do something directly about the conditions which make television possible. We have a way of treating the despair, the spiritual disorders and the uncreative work, even if only on a small scale for each of us or each group of us. It is difficult for us to do this work now, but it will be virtually impossible once the human pain has been deadened by the powerful new drug. To the extent that we resist television ourselves, so much the more apostolic zeal will we possess. To the extent we can persuade others to resist also, so much the more possible will it be to get through to them with the Good News.

Let no one say that the advice to resist television is being negative. The absence of television is no more a negation than sobriety is. It is more like the minimum condition of receptivity to the words of salvation.

PETER MICHAELS

Television and Training Children

The technological phenomenon of television can be looked at and discussed from many different angles. We want here to consider two aspects: its impact on children being raised within a family, and its possible future results on these children in their adulthood. In other words, how well does TV lend itself to the great purposes in life: love, union with God, and the continuation of the restorative work of the incarnation?

One of the most important functions of the Christian home has always been education. Today it ought to be so more than ever, for the Christian family has been assigned a great role in restoring society to Christ. The Christian home atmosphere and an integrated attitude of the parents are important parts of the general "tone" of family life. God, Who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the supreme reality in such a home. Every thought, act and deed must converge in Him, in an earnest desire to carry out God's will. It is this desire that we want our children to acquire. Certainly God's grace is at work here. So also is example and all that can be summed up under education. History convinces us that great persons everywhere and in all ages received profound formation in early childhood, despite any poverty, suffering, misunderstanding or other hardship that was their lot. Until the recent advent of technology this formation was concentrated on the development of the inner faculties of looking, listening, concentrating, thinking, deciding, etc. We have only to look to the history of our own United States to see that the childhood of our leaders has benefitted by rugged, responsible and creative (rather than passive) childhoods, often with the added inestimable benefit of daily family reading of the Bible and family prayers. Abraham Lincoln's log cabin and self-education by firelight are legendary. And how many outstanding Americans not so long dead were children along with Huckleberry Finn? Such a pre-technological life, calling as it did for full play of the intellect and the will, self-reliance and a variety of skills, constantly schooling and exercising the conscience, is easily raised to a supernatural framework and a participation in the mystery of grace.

The Christian Home Full of Grace

The Christian home centers around grace. Our educational effort as parents is like gentle planting and watering. It is preparation, most necessary indeed, for God's increase which is grace. Any child is His child, to whom the effects of His work of redemption are accessible. And such a whole and holy formed child

will grow into that creative maturity that will make the salvation of its soul its vocation. And this vocation will in turn bear fruit in some work among the myriads of labors necessary for bringing the world to Christ.

Such a formation rests on stimulating the correct and integrated use of man's abilities and faculties. We are whole beings needing to be made holy. We are made in God's image and likeness with an intellect and a will, with emotions and senses. But we suffer from the effects of original sin. To become holy and thereby also to sanctify the workings of the world we must overcome the fallen aspect of man's nature. We need self-control, tact, nobleness, respect, reverence, charity, justice, honesty, to mention only a few qualities at random. The religious, artistic, intuitive, cognitive and other energies of a person's soul must be developed and disciplined. Finally the abilities of conception, comprehension, abstraction and understanding of God's creation must be gained. Without self-conquest we cannot fill and possess the world as God commanded, we cannot co-operate with Christ in restoring all things to the order of charity. The world will not be brought to Christ, nor will politics, business and all the secular realm be subject to moral man. Rather will man's life remain subject to the daemonic influence of evil.

Audio-Visual Hypnotism

The average man in this country today sees life as a series of inconsistent, flashing and sensational pictures. Movies have long been conditioning the brains and souls of impressionable human beings on account of the low quality of most pictures. Some of the rare "good" ones only prove this by their exception. It needs heroic effort to Christianize the movies, though they lend themselves quite readily to bad usage. Since it is a distracting medium the best of its messages are lost on most men. Even when they convey a soul-stirring experience they not rarely lead to false "visions" of God's will (as in several instances of imaginary apparitions following the Bernadette film). How tragic this is.

Visual education is very persuasive. How many of us need miracles in order to believe! Even Thomas the Apostle had to see in order to believe. And although Christ in His loving mercy performed miracles, He did not fail to add that they are blessed who can do without them! But when pictures are connected with the irresponsible use of technology we are often led into the blindness of those who cannot see below surface impressions. We see only the outside of everything, including Christ, love and

justice. One should *look* more rather than *see.* But why strain the eyes, heart and brain when the camera's lens and the film's canvas can reproduce an impression so much more exactly? Yet this exact mechanical picture devoid of life is wretched in comparison with the imprint of truth upon a soul filled with grace.

The popular press, the radio, even modern education are in a continuous hurry, in a flippant frame of mind, carried along upon the crest of an ocean of words becoming a crescendo of noise, losing the significance of the word like so many drops in the sea. This noisy haste neither permits reflection upon the responsibility of the Word nor brings about that silence which is conversation with God.

The Good Is Stultified

Television accentuates the negative aspects of this clamor and belittles by its very nature the good elements. It makes it doubly hard to restore the faculties of the eyes, ears and tongue to their proper functions. For it is through these senses in the first instance that we can gain an awareness of God, so we ought to stop and think before we allow them to be dulled and abused. Who does not know the home where the radio or the television set is on and no one listens or is aware of it? Our senses, which are meant to be sharp, have been stultified so that they don't hear any more, even a roar. How can they listen to the quiet voice of conscience? The continuously changing picture on television, the changing music, the noise, the concentration of life stories into a few minutes, and above all the hypnotic effect of TV are not conducive to that wholeness and inner order needed to flood one's soul with the awareness of God and to cast out any daemonic forces lurking in man and the world. It is very difficult to further this struggle between light and darkness by a noisy, flashing, hypnotic gadget. Values begin to fluctuate, responding to base animal instincts in man.

In order that technology in all its aspects can be fruitful (which it is supposed to be) and be readily used as a blessed instrument of divine influence, the daemonic must first and continuously be driven out of man. The inner man must be in order. Yes indeed, how very many virtues it needs to be able to utilize technology and its apparatus without substantial loss to men's souls. How much self-control, tact, nobility, reverence. And as we see very clearly in the case of television, these are among the very virtues which this technological achievement at present can easily cripple in man. The evil is not that man *possesses* technology, but that *technology possesses man* and makes him a slave

in one way or another. This is the case especially in television. It's a pleasant easy-chair slavery, but more total than physical slavery (even of the assembly line) because it first fascinates and hypnotizes the spiritual in man and later blunts and dulls his faculties.

The Power of the Daemonic

In TV then, there blossoms forth clearer than ever before in any audio-visual gadgets for those who possess the discernment of spirits, the power of the daemonic in the world. In it we can sense more surely than ever the sickness of our time.

Who has not heard the TV-owning fine Catholic mother exclaim, "But it is such a good baby sitter!" We who write this know about the problems of the Christian family with many children. We come from such families and we ourselves are walking in their arduous and happy path. It is a tragedy that at the very moment when Christian family life is more than ever before called upon to help restore the world to Christ we find Christians throwing away golden opportunities for creativity in favor of TV. To create and recreate with God is preeminently the task of parents together with their children. It is one of the most essential tasks of education: to *live* and *do* things together during that short span of time that the children are at home, before they step out into life and follow their own vocations. God only knows how much spectator sports, organized entertainment, the movie-going mania, etc. have done to destroy that education in and with the family. TV brings all this right into the parlor, thus eliminating even the home as the last refuge.

Everyone has heard the argument that, well after all everyone will get tired of it; it used to be the same with radio, and before that with the phonograph player. Apart from the fact that most people do *not* seem to get tired of it and that "evil" always discovers new ways to attract the attention of mankind, we find it very sad that this should be offered as the solution to the problem. By getting tired of it neither the gadget itself nor man's soul which had received its effects has been changed.

Christian Control

Who, finally, has not heard the enthusiasm of a missionizing and pastoral zeal which is eager to utilize TV to bring everything from the story of saints to Midnight Mass into the homes of the sick, poor and even the non-Christian? Superficially what a fine ideal it seems to be! However it is practically unnecessary to point out that *much* more of the material which comes over TV channels will be inevitably of quite a different effect. Personally

we'd rather read Midnight Mass out of the missal, in spiritual union with our brethren, than have it sandwiched between a soap and beer advertisement. The fundamental trouble lies in fallen man's propensity for evil, which has not been held in check or rectified in many men for generations. Consequently these modern media of communication adapt themselves much more readily to the promotion of evil than of good. The argument of Christian control does not go deep enough. A control of such powerful instruments presupposes a deep catharsis of men's souls. The following little story will illustrate how weak we are where we should be strong.

It was Christmas Day 1950. Christmas Eve brought us a great present, another baby boy. With gladness in my heart I made the rounds of the village, wishing the neighbors His peace and blessings, and bringing the good tidings of the symbolic birth. On my way I entered a good Christian home. Five children lounged in front of the TV set. The Christmas tree stood forlorn in a corner, no longer a center of family life. One boy was just turning the knob in search of a program. There flashed by a woman dressed as an Arab, sitting on a donkey being led by an Arab. I expressed interest and the father of the house asked his son to turn this scene back onto the screen. Then the parent, who was raised in a world without radio and television, told me with some satisfaction and enthusiasm how nice he thought this sketch was of Our Lady and Saint Joseph, shown on their way in search of an inn; how true it was to life two thousand years ago. We watched the program for awhile, but I had difficulty concentrating. The woman looked Hollywoodish, the man I had seen before in some Western show; the background reminded me of Army days in the southwest. But I was not permitted either to reminisce or concentrate, for the children as with one voice clamored to turn to a different program. They said they had already looked at this one twice. They claimed to know it by now and wanted to see something *new.* Moreover the stars in it, obviously familiar to them, were supposedly so much better in some other movie. The father acquiesced. Let the reader meditate on this little episode.

You Can't Televize Christ's Mystical Body

The ever-new yet always the same, the spectacular, sensational yet artificial presentation, the hypnotic and total outwardness of TV is bound to cripple man's inwardness. You cannot televize Christ's Mystical Body, but you can live and participate in it. For that purpose not even a comfortable living room is necessary, much less a TV set. Imagine having to re-focus the

set just at the elevation at Mass. God forbid! Christ is in our neighbors and we can find Him better in real life than on the screen. It is *life* that is real, the screen is only "pleasant" escapism.

Among our TV-owning neighbors we notice that the older generation who grew up in a world where evil and daemonic forces were not present at the behest of pushbuttons, but only appeared as a result of lack of co-operation with God's will, *can* practice discernment at times. They often use the film, radio and television with self-control. They can still, for instance, turn it on in order to learn, this being a favorite justification; or to relax, this being an understandable desire.

But it is with our children and theirs that we are concerned, and thus indirectly also with the life of man in a complex society, and his health in His Mystical Body. It is a fact, against which only the blind can demonstrate, that these modern instruments of communication make it well-nigh impossible for a child to acquire the virtues and skills necessary for saving his soul and subduing the earth for Christ. Furthermore it is indisputable that the flashiness, glitter and actual childishness of television prevent the development of inner maturity, of which self-control and discernment are two manifestations. The lack of this self-control makes it impossible for television to be used constructively. Where a home is based on mutual love, and discipline prevails, where there is an atmosphere of living and doing things together, people could in many instances employ TV positively were it not for the difficulty of acquiring and attaining self-control when it is around. If it were possible to disregard the advertisements and certain incongruous noises, one could find even at the moment several constructive programs a week. But it is precisely with families who have the virtues of self-control, from homes without frustration, small Noah's arks of mutual love and co-operative creation, that the least clamor rises for a TV set. We know some such families. We ourselves are leading in our own family such busy and rich lives doing things together that we find even the turning on of the radio robs us of some of our inner peace and happiness, deprives us of moments of free creativeness. Sometimes when we are making our own music in our own home it is a sacrifice even to listen to the news, however necessary this is. In other words these gadgets are, for many who know what they want, and what they are here for on this earth, a distraction, and for those who do not know it they are opium to keep away from having to make a decision.

Man's Free Will

Must TV become a vicious circle progressively subjecting man to daemonic influence and decadence? It is not inevitable, because man has free will! He can in all circumstances remain free and sovereign, if he wants to. He can live his own rich life within the family circle and the community. But it is also true that all acts of man once started must run their full course, whether for good or for evil. Those who see the issue will act accordingly. Those who love the freedom of Christ and the human dignity which He lived for us in His incarnation under God's fatherhood for us all, will develop their own richer lives. For freedom develops us, while slavery stunts our growth. These families will continue to devise, under the pressure of the attraction of these new gadgets, patterns that will strengthen their own family life and the upbringing of their children. This is a partial explanation of why God permits evil to exist and spread. It seems to be able to arouse and call forth exactly those attitudes needed to overcome the specific manifestations of the Devil at a given period.

The Challenge Bears Fruit

Without this pressure and challenge too many men continue to drift. A crisis is an opportunity in work clothes. Once challenged man is conscience bound to make a decision and live accordingly. And what of the rest of mankind who cannot see it this way (especially those remaining addicted to TV)? We are no prophets, but we know two things: history makes all men wiser in the long run, even if it fails to make individuals smarter for the next time; and secondly, what is more important, we know of the loving mercy of God. Christianity cannot count on a radical abolition of daemonic power until the end of time, when the last remains of evil will have been eliminated. In the meantime the challenge of evil strengthens those who in every generation are of heroic stature. Our job is to participate in the overcoming of evil in a special way, by sacrifice, so that a new world under a new sky will be possible for men who are all brothers. Then men will no longer be persuaded to turn to gadgets, but to God.

What of the children who are meant to be the leaders of the future? A famous radio jingle dared to say before Christmas that psychologists believe your child will suffer if it has no TV set and the neighbors have one. Well, here lies the challenge that will bear exactly the fruit needed to bring up young men and women capable of pulling the world out of its present crisis. The

Sacraments are a reality able to strengthen such endeavors. Family life will have to be such an integrated, constructive and strong attraction for the children that good will prevail over evil with God's help. This task of education in turn will raise the generations capable of co-operating with grace to drive the daemonic from the world.

ERNST and JOHANNA WINTER



IN THIS SIGN

Twisted cross against the sky,

A sign of contradiction,

Lives so set on living, die,

Oh useless crucifixion!

The Silent Apostolate

"What is the poet's ecstasy? A flying.
The soul unjessed darts upward, crying, crying . . ."

When I first read these lines by the New Zealand poet, Eileen Duggan, I thought they were written just for me!

In those days I used to skip class sometimes on spring afternoons and walk for miles along the abandoned railroad tracks that ran in back of the college. From this retreat, remote and peaceful, I viewed life and all human experience with an inspired and penetrating gaze.

Words came so easily to me then. They would fit almost any subject with hardly an effort. I could interpret love, death, loss. God help me, I could all but explain His Mysteries!

Afterward it was different. When I had to face life itself I found myself lost on a windy street with no lights in any window, dust blowing into my face, all my little wisdoms wasted. A bitter time, failure, disappointment, necessities unsatisfied!

One day after months of bewilderment I took out the notebook in which I had been scribbling down thoughts that came to me from time to time. Looking at the pages I suddenly knew that Almighty God did not like what I had written there. Although I could not understand or accept what was happening to me, I sensed dimly that I could not at that moment express my thoughts without displeasing Him.

Words had turned traitors. They mocked what they intended to convey. I saw with terror that in my bitterness I might even make a mockery of the divine plan.

Furiously I tore out the pages and threw them away. The empty notebook I tossed into a corner of my drawer. For years it lay disregarded under a pile of clothing. I would not try to describe what I endured until I knew why I endured it.

By a mystery of providence, my life thereafter was to consist in living out pain by pain, loneliness by loneliness, failure by failure, what I had so unerringly described with a sort of intuition in my early poems. But this time the glamor of the happy phrase was missing. The inspiring music that makes scenes of crisis so dramatic on the movie screen was played no more.

Since then I have never undertaken to write anything without having to overcome sharp rebellion, the most exquisite mental and physical torture. Worst of all are the endless well meant

queries of those whose ivory towers I so summarily deserted: Where are all those lovely poems you used to write?

The Divine Silence

I remember years ago asking some question in religion class with all the pride of youthful conceit:

"Suppose God had . . . could He have . . .?"

Our teacher, tall and formidable in his black cassock, came down the aisle with giant stride and a voice of thunder as if to annihilate me where I stood.

"Never," he shouted, "never, never, never speak about Almighty God like that again!"

I realized what he meant. I knew that the Israelites of old did not even name the Almighty, but they called Him Nameless—He-Who-Cannot-Be-Named.

When God told us about His dearest creation, He chose to use very few words. He cast about the Blessed Mother a veil of silence in which her immaculate beauty and purity might remain forever safe from prying eyes.

She moves through the Scriptures in deepest secrecy, her coming heralded in paradoxes: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son: and His Name shall be called Emmanuel." Her praises are sung in delicate metaphors: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun." Her comings and goings are hidden and humble, often in darkness. We read of the vision of Saint Joseph, who, after being warned by the angel, "arose and took the child and his mother *by night* and retired into Egypt." Her words are so few we hardly hear her speak.

God evidently did not wish her to be interviewed at crucial moments in her life. Her thoughts, joys, griefs, even her glories remain mysterious to us. Artists have painted tears on the face of the Pieta. Poets have tried to elaborate the Magnificat. But Mary is "a garden enclosed." Her presence through the ages remains unchangeable, quiet, peaceful, unexploited.

Only the innocent see her when she appears on earth. Sophisticates marvel or doubt—their eyes probably blinded by their own impurities. She trusts neither reporter nor photographer, but the uncorrupted eyes of some simple person whose poor and plain vocabulary is so maddening to our articulate generation.

When the young Jew, Alphonse de Ratisbonne, stood before her statue, Our Blessed Lady did not even need to speak. She did not plead with him to receive the faith. She explained no doctrines. She did not even move. She merely looked at him, and

that look was so expressive, so compelling, that presence so real that he was converted immediately.

It seems paradoxical. But Our Lord, remember, did not merely preach the Word. He was the Word. Yet the redemption was accomplished, not on the lecture platform, not in the most sublime poetry, but on the Cross.

Conversation Made in Heaven

Words may clarify, it is true. But they may also corrupt. To use too many words is not merely bad taste. It is impure. The senses crave endless satisfaction. Our imagination calls up picture after picture, blurring, obscuring, often defiling the subject with its outpourings.

Words have become our temptors, no longer our servants. We participate in a sort of perpetual Gallup poll. We must be ready at all times, whether waiting on the street corner for a bus or peeling the potatoes for dinner, to give views for publication on world politics, antibiotics, atomic fission. Millions earn their living in our society by frantically condensing events so that we can all have a talking acquaintance with the universe. To be able to speak well, to say much about many subjects, is a criterion of social success. The unfortunate popularization of psychological terminology has led to a morbid emphasis upon subjective reactions to all situations.

Even the Ineffable comes under the scalpel of our little minds. We continually snatch at meanings, no matter how holy, how much to be revered, grabbing at transcendent significances with our clumsy and destructive phrases.

But truth itself is chaste. Only the chaste pen captures it. Escaping the nets of our literary constructions it takes refuge in a few simple words that have entirely lost their meaning for us, and so conceal all meaning. Goodness. Love. Peace.

If we would tell the truth, we must learn the value of silence, for silence is the purity of language, the sole explanation of life's deepest meanings.

The Failure of Language

It's so hard for us to accept this limitation of language. We always find we have so much to say. We rush about in a flurry of words, explaining ourselves, talking about many subjects, making endless remarks, smiling at our own verbal victories. We wish above all to make ourselves clearly understood, to explain our very being almost, if that were possible.

Then suddenly our mouths are stopped by an intruder's hand. We are cast into a frightening and unaccustomed silence. Immovable, imprisoned, transfixed, we grope for the words which used to serve us so readily. They blunder in darkness and trail off hopelessly. They express nothing of what we really feel. Experience becomes too sharp, too significant, too piercing, too comprehensive. A kind God perhaps wishes to paralyze our tongues for a while so that we may hear Him.

But we do not know this yet. We feel ourselves cut off like lepers from other men. As if suffering alone were not enough of a stigma, we must also be ashamed because we are inarticulate, like strangers in our own land, dumb objects of ridicule. Up until now, we never dreamed it existed—this silence that is now visited upon us like some relentless gaoler. We crave to be understood, to receive sympathy. In our pride we want to make excuses for our actions. We cry out, but the silent winds carry off our voice. Our tears fall, burning and futile, into an ocean of silence. We wish so much to justify our existence. If only we could speak! Yet He holds us there speechless.

Priceless Cloak

To the saints silence is precious. They desire more than anything else to be taken for fools. It is an admirable disguise which leaves them marvelously free to pursue the divine conversation. Our Blessed Lord very often sees to it that His loved ones are quite hidden. He wishes no doubt to spare His love from human stares. He hides them down in the kitchen among the pots and pans. He hides them behind a grotesque face or a dull personality, in extravagantly foolish clown suits and in beggar's rags, in old housedresses, and, with a rather humorous touch, he even hides them in monasteries and convents so that their fellow religious don't recognize them.

"Whatever will Reverend Mother find to say about Sister Therese when she is dead," wonders the nun in the Carmel at Lisieux as she reflects on the customary eulogy given by the superior whenever one of the community dies. "There is really nothing noteworthy about her!"

You see the Bridegroom will go to any length to be alone with His Beloved!

But for us the way to silence is indeed painful. What is offered as a penance may become a gift only if we accept the penance. Have you ever noticed how seldom the poor complain of their lot? No, beneath their crushing burdens they are silent, leaving someone else to speak for them. Silence is their dignity, their last privacy. And so with us. It enables us to keep our

peace even when we must appear before the world wearing only our sins and sufferings.

The Golden Tongue of Charity

The question arises: That's all very well for *them.* But what about us? If we accept this silence that is forced upon us, doesn't this mean that we shall be withdrawing from our fellowman, denying him the companionship, the consolation, the services that charity demands?

I think it is just the opposite. Of course we are not talking about the silence of the stoic, or of the moody, or of the defeated. Not that tragic silence of those who are turning away from life altogether to the desolation within. We don't mean never speaking either, because for us who live in the world that would mean denying charity.

We are describing an attitude, a pattern, a discipline rather than its opposite, which is noise, pride, confusion, endless explanations to keep face before men.

We are trying to point out the horizons of speech.

Here is something I tore out of a magazine years ago, *Commonweal* I think, from an article by Father Jean de Menasce:

> It is not easy to live, to love, to act in the invisible, the impalpable, and in silence. This Invisible, this Impalpable, this Silent One is not only the origin and end of our acts, our gifts, our conversations and our love; He prolongs our acts and gives them motion. Yet animated by this Silent One we see ourselves as ridiculous dancers whom no heard music—not even an inner music—explains.
>
> For months, for years, the priest stumbles, trips and dances to this music which no one hears—not even he. Is there a difference between the priest and the lunatic? The lunatic acts, speaks, gesticulates like Napoleon. But he is not Napoleon. Dancing to this imperceptible music I am perhaps a lunatic. Like a lunatic I go deeper and deeper into a fearful solitude, a solitude bound by no walls. But then, in order to reassure his tortured priest, God shows him very simply that he is not a lunatic. For the priest entering deeper into the Silent One, living faithful to the Silent One, is not—as is the lunatic—continuously more isolated and separated from men who smoke, chase girls, go to the movies. The deeper he advances, the more he is held to men; he becomes a friend, he understands other men, other men trust him. . . .

Francis was a poet as well as a saint. Yet he never wrote a poem, I think, about the fiery Seraph he met on Mount Alvernia, who came down to make visible on his body the wounds of the Passion that Francis had so long borne in his heart. Assisi was not told of this. Francis tried to hide it. Didn't he scold the worried brother who came to look for him?

Yet from these wounds hidden on his poor body flowed a stream of love that took in all of creation—men, beasts, flowers. It was a love so prodigal that only the universe could contain it, expressing itself in mountainous stupendous acts of charity.

The conversation between God and the soul must be carried on in silence. Its expression is not words; it is the abundance of charity which goes out to other men and takes their needs for its own duty.

Perhaps when we give up trying to explain ourselves, we begin to understand others better. Considering the inexpressible secrets of our own hearts, we can easily respect the secrets of those others around us, so close, yet so remote. We find ourselves acting toward others in consideration of the inexpressible—and we don't mind taking second place to their primary conversation, which is with God.

The silence of God's will for us becomes a sort of window through which we view other men in a more detached way. We no longer think so much of our own discouragement and heartache. Our wounds no longer demand redress, but those of others become unbearable to us. Even our tears are hidden now, lest sympathy or curiosity cheapen them. How much more hidden are the tears of those who suffer more? In our abandonment our one desire is to console others, for only in this way can we ourselves be consoled. The silence that was at first such a humiliation now becomes our greatest comfort.

Holy Peace

And in our anguished times what is better than to preach peace? To be peace! Once we have given up that competition with others that makes us feverishly strive to "keep up," we immediately remove one of the main causes of our habitual disquiet. Never mind any more what people will think. They are already too wrapped up in their own various despairs to notice us very much. And just think how good it is for them if we are able to keep our peace in the midst of so much turmoil, so many opinions

and conflicts. Our presence may do more than thousands of words.

Sometimes when we come face to face with holy persons, we are disappointed because they speak about something quite ordinary. They tell some amusing little story. They offer us a cup of coffee. At any rate they seem entirely irrelevant to our burning issues. But later on it comes to us that what they said, what they did, cast more light on the problem than endless discussions we have had with others.

This is the true understanding—implicit, fruitful, reverent. Gerard Hopkins put it tersely in a little quatrain:

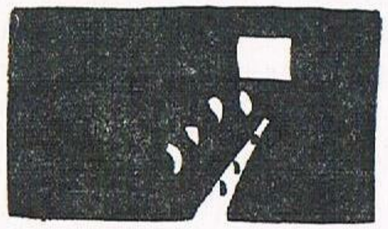
Shape nothing, lips; be lovely dumb;
It is the shut, the curfew sent
From there where all surrenders come
Which only makes you eloquent.

Saint Benedict Joseph Labre put it another way, equally terse, one April morning in 1785 when he fell down on the steps of Santa Maria dei Monti in Rome. Some passersby picked him up, carried him next door and laid him on a bed. He was dead in a few minutes. Maybe the shock of lying on a bed once more after thirteen homeless years hastened the end. But when they looked at him they saw only a poor wandering tramp. He hadn't a thing to his name except the torn coat, the rosary around his neck, the crucifix on his breast, one or two pious books in his pocket. So far as we know, he never preached or wrote a word. He died as silently as he had lived. Yet Rome which has revelled in the eloquence and rhetoric of all the ages took this man of silence and made him one of its special patrons, its holy places holier for having been his home.

I think that is what Eileen Duggan meant in the last lines of that poem I quoted in the beginning.

And sound is less than silence now and ever;
A bliss so strung the lightest word might sever.
The poet sings—the saint is dumb forever.

ELIZABETH M. SHEEHAN



SONGS OF A WAYSIDE INN

The bar was strangely silent,
The corners dark as night,
A vibrant voice dispelled the gloom,
And whistled "Rinso White."

BOOK REVIEWS

Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor

SUCH LOVE IS SELDOM
By Anne Cawley Boardman
Harper, $3.00

In my parish there are two small communities of nuns (teaching sisters and the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor). One or the other group is often at the seven o'clock Mass. The communion rail is long, and the nuns sit on either side of the center aisle. From time immemorial the laity have waited for the religious to go forward at Communion time and from forever the sisters have knelt in the middle of the rail. The rest of us filled in on either side. That always posed a neat problem for the priest. Should he give Communion to the sisters first, and then return at the beginning of the line? Or should he sacrifice courtesy to efficiency? Some did one thing, some the other. Then one morning the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor got up and marched themselves way off into right field where the communion rail begins. It was an obvious solution, but unexpected. Why is it one never expects nuns to change their customs? Anyhow, more or less during this same period the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor changed from starched to soft veils and they go quietly about our tenements one by one instead of two by two, so it's apparent that their order is unusual.

To my mind the most unusual thing about the order is that it does the works of mercy simply, without specialization, fanfare, red tape, inquisitions, referrals or institutions. The sisters are nurses who take care of the sick poor in their own homes—also clean, take care of the children, cook the husband's supper, render spiritual aid and bring in food and supplies where necessary, not to mention arranging for funerals. They correspond with the human need in a society that's trying to get human beings to correspond with mechanical systems.

This book is about the foundress of the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor, a Mary Walsh who came over from Ireland nearly a century ago and became a laundress. That was in the vicinity of this parish too. Between the Dominican Fathers, who first gave her spiritual direction and whose Tertiary she became, and the Paulists who really saw her through the years of her work and directed the formation of her institution, she was guided from spontaneous charitable acts to serious group work and finally to the formation of a religious order. Those early years were filled with laundry, sick calls, hunger, cold, T.B., rats, and tenement stairs. And disappointments, monumental disappointments and discouragements. Also trials and misunderstandings. All borne with a patience, humility and hope that make me suspect that Mary Walsh is a saint who may some day be canonized. I hope so. She's just precisely the sort of model we need in this neighborhood where many of those old tenements still stand, rotting among the new de luxe apartment houses, but where rich, poor, and parishioners alike think they are on an escalator headed for an earthly utopia. A plain-faced, raw-boned Irish servant-girl with chapped hands might rectify our sense of values.

CAROL JACKSON

The Divine Physician

NEUROSES AND SACRAMENTS
By Alan Keenan, O.F.M.
Sheed and Ward, $2.50

Since it is generally agreed that the ancient troubles of the world are now to be termed "neurotic" and since we read that the only cure for neurosis is psychoanalysis, a great number of Catholics unhappy at this resolution of their problems will be avid readers of the recently published *Neuroses and Sacraments* written by an English Franciscan, Father Alan Keenan.

Certainly no medical cult since the days of Mesmerism has produced such a stir as Freudian psychoanalysis. As a matter of fact, Mesmerism and Freudianism have many interesting points in common. Like the great cult which preceded it, psychoanalysis often helps for a time exactly the same suggestible group of psychoneurotics, provided the symptoms are mild enough. Again like Mesmerism, its modern successor makes pretense of being a science, publishes journals, has quite an impressive "scientific" vocabulary and has even won over a few sound men who should know better. It follows naturally from the very nature of the cult movement that psychoanalysis should also have much of its antecedent's zeal for proselytizing. And so we find that as there are today psychoanalytic training centers with effective apparatus for publicity, so in the last century there were to be found Harmonic Institutes the length and breadth of Europe with equally urgent propaganda.

In a sense both cults are a product of their times. For while in Mesmerism there is an echo of the great Romantic revolution which swept over northern Europe at the time, so the central doctrines of the analogous cult a century later are found to be profoundly cynical and decivilizing.

As has been stated above, *Neuroses and Sacraments* will appeal to many different kinds of readers. Some will be people who, despite all they have read and been taught to the contrary, for a long time have felt that there was some sort of fundamental relationship between sound or unsound religion and emotional disturbances. Still other readers will have resented the pretensions of Freudianism and will have felt that its claims are somewhat arrogant and scientifically unfounded. But probably not the least appreciative readers of the book will be those Catholic psychiatrists who for many years have known facts not easily accessible to the public. As clinicians they know that the orthodox Freudian approach lights up and aggravates all psychoses, is ineffective with the older age groups and helps only mild types of neurotic reactions. As clinicians they also know that there is more to the problems of man than the Freudian attainment of genital primacy. The chief aim of psychoanalysis has been set down in the following language: "The main curative factor in adult psychoanalysis is the fact that with the removal of repressions, genital primacy is established." (Fenichel: *The Psychoanalytic Theory of the Neuroses,* p. 576.) Elsewhere in the same volume speaking of the halt, the lame and the blind, he adds: "If he (the patient) has possibilities of libidinal and narcissistic gratification analysis seems more hopeful than if analysis would only bring the insight that life has been a failure." (p. 596). Of the value of religion for those unfortunates condemned to a life of celibacy, Freud has spoken fully in his *Future of an Illusion.*

Now Father Keenan is not only a man of science but a religionist. Quite different from the Freudians is his *anthropology,* or his concept of the nature, goal and end of man, the role of God in man's being and development and the proper function of psychotherapy in this scheme.

Needless to say Father Keenan's book will be of tremendous importance to the faithful who already accept his premises. One feels, however, that few non-Catholics, those who need this book the most, will read it from cover to cover. For many non-Catholics will be disconcerted by the fact that this work in a fashion certainly not intended by its author, contains at least by implication two irreconcilable frames of reference. The point of view for the major part of the book is naturally enough the theistic, supernatural one of the Catholic theologian. However, from time to time without warning and with something like the jarring click of a magic lantern slide there are interpolated, as it were, quite everyday descriptions of the common neuroses which very well might have been extracted from some popular introduction to psychoanalysis. Since the author is most probably capable of doing so, one feels that these clinical extracts should have been digested, as it were, in terms of Catholic language and thinking. To anybody who thoroughly knows this area, it is difficut to read these descriptions of the anxiety neurosis, hysteria and the compulsion neurosis without evoking the painful and withal unscientific connotations of Freud and his postulate of pansexuality. One wishes that the author had chosen to describe these disease groups consistently in terms of Catholic psychology. One wishes that he had taken pains to point out how the germs of emotional disease can be traced developmentally in every neurotic to the central dynamic of a God-creature relationship.

Quite aside from supernatural and spiritual premises, the non-Catholic who perseveres in reading this book cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that a skeleton scheme of Catholic theology is, as it were, the reverse or projection of opposites, of mental and emotional illness. Those outside the faith will try to deny that there is such a thing as sanctifying grace, but if intellectually alert they should see something mystifying and provocative about the fact that, aside from supernatural considerations, faith stands in opposition to neurotic (and preschizophrenic) emotional insecurity; hope to neurotic "free-floating" anxiety; charity to that core of all neuroses, megalomania and callousness. In the same way the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit have their exact opposites in neurotic symtomatology. To be brief then, "mental hygiene" can be viewed as one of the by-products of ascetical theology.

But what about the oft repeated phrase, "aside from spiritual or supernatural considerations"? Is there a God pervading and directing all parts of the universe, or isn't there? The question is not unimportant. For the benefit of his non-Catholic readers, most of whom will be atheists, Father Keenan might well have added a special chapter dealing with the tremendous fact that the physicist of today has been driven by the force of facts to a belief in God. What answer could the cynic with his vaunted passion for reason and "reality testing" make to the following quite typical excerpt from Ernest Barnes: "All these considerations lead me to think that, in the religious revival which will assuredly, though perhaps tardily, follow the present unrest, conversion will become once again a

great spiritual force. It will be associated . . . with a belief that the world described by science is the realm of God" (*Scientific Theory and Religion* p. 617).

No one will question the fact, for statistics prove it, that there is less neurosis and mental illness in Catholic cultures. And it should not be too difficult to show how Christianity contains all the answers to our present problems, including the problem of neurosis. In point of fact, in an earlier age, within the anaphora of the Mass itself there were special prayers for energumens. The Clementine Liturgy, which may be considered typical, has catechumens, energumens, competentes (photizomenoi) and penitents, each with a special litany and prayer.

The problem touched upon by this book is a perennial one. It is the problem of presenting to those who lie outside the faith, the truth of the Catholic religion. The difficulties involved have been various. Today we would do well to remember that in the sub-apostolic age Catholics were able to argue for the evidences of Christianity in terms of the pagan traditions and philosophy of their auditors.

AUTOLICUS

McNabb, Not Roosevelt

A SAINT IN HYDE PARK
By E. A. Siderman
Newman, $2.00

When the power and magnetism of a man is such that it inspires an ideological opponent of his to write a book about him, we sit up and take notice. But when he is elevated to the stature of a saint by his opponent, we instinctively demand an explanation of such a personality. After having read *A Saint in Hyde Park,* you will have learned what it really takes to make friends and influence people.

This little book contains a faithful account of the noted Dominican, Father Vincent McNabb's outdoor public speaking appearances in London's famous Hyde Park and at numerous other platforms, as seen through the eyes of Mr. Siderman, one of Father McNabb's most persistent and relentless hecklers at Hyde Park for twenty-five years. The author's descriptions of Father McNabb and the meetings are tantalizingly brief but because of his well chosen anecdotes the reader is given the opportunity to meet the real, living man . . . "a slight figure of about medium height, with bent shoulders, wearing his loose, well-worn Dominican habit of coarse black and white material, a khaki haversack slung over his shoulder, thick knitted white stockings, heavy-soled, black, old-fashioned boots usually unlaced, and a battered shapeless soft black felt hat, the blackness turning green with age." His sanctity endeared him to his audiences and enabled him to put over effectively his profound knowledge of theology and its practical applications to everyday living. If his behavior seems at times unorthodox, it is the powerful and appealing unorthodoxy of humility and sincerity based on deep love of the faith and all men.

If you are acquainted with street-corner discussions, either as a speaker or listener, you will feel right at home with Father McNabb, Mr. Siderman and the varied assortment of people at Hyde Park; if not, you will have discovered a new and exciting world.

ALICE VISLOCKY

Credit Unions

THE POOR MAN'S PRAYER
By George Boyle
Harper, $2.50
CREDIT FOR THE MILLIONS
By Richard Y. Giles
Harper, $2.50

George Boyle, author of *Democracy's Second Chance,* one of the finest interpretations of the spirit behind the co-operative movement, has now done a similar service for the credit-union movement. Not that the two movements are things apart; they are not. Each integrates with the other in something very close to what the papal encyclicals are calling for in the economic order.

This time the author has used the method of the novel, and his main character, Alphonse Desjardins, founder of the North American credit-union movement, comes to life in a warm and tremendously inspiring way. Quebec was the scene of Desjardins' birth and major work, and while reading I so often called to mind those two other wonderful novels on the same city—*Shadows on the Rock,* by Willa Cather, and *Maria Chapdelaine,* by Louis Hémon, the great classic of Canadian literature.

Quebec is built on a rock and history is all around you there. Across the majestic St. Lawrence River is the little town of Levis and about twenty miles down the river is Ste. Anne de Beaupre, known to millions of devout pilgrims as the place of many miracles.

In Levis, Desjardins worked his way up from poverty to a position of some importance in the province. He had been a newspaperman with *L'Echo de Levis* and *Le Canadien,* the first French Canadian paper in Canada. Gradually he had become a general reporter who could be counted on to handle the larger stories. The publication of the first records of the speeches in the Quebec legislature marked the early phase of his career. He did this at his own expense and then sold the issues. In publishing them just as they were given he established a method which was later to become the official and regular procedure. Only then it was revolutionary.

Then ill health brought him down to poverty again and he saw with a new light the problems of the poor, so easily deprived of their homes and possessions because they had no recourse to easy credit and loans in times of distress. He had studied much and the idea of a *caisse populaire* gripped him. It was a sort of people's bank where the poor could put their dimes and quarters and obtain loans when they needed them on their own signatures. The idea spread to the United States and became our credit unions. Desjardins was invited to New Hampshire and there started the first credit union in this country.

Now there are some 13,500 in Canada and the United States. The Province of Quebec has 1078 of these, almost as many as there are Catholic parishes. No Quebec credit union has ever been liquidated.

Even if you aren't interested in the workings of a credit union, you can still read the book for its story. The author has an exceptional writing talent and you will learn much about life in Canada in the first part of the century. Desjardins' lifetime was a period of great political debate when Canada first realized it was becoming a nation. The credit-union movement had no small part in creating the social solidarity of the people of Quebec. No student of political economy can afford to pass by this book without reading it.

George Boyle's book approaches the study of the credit union in its beginnings. We come to see the idea taking root in North America, through the efforts of a man distressed over the sufferings of the poor. In his compassion he figures out a way to help them.

Richard Y. Giles looks backward at the movement. He studies it with remarkable penetration. He must have gone around everywhere questioning credit-union leaders by the dozens. The bibliography of the book is very extensive and the analysis of credit-union problems is extremely acute. (I am an official of a credit union and can speak from close first-hand experience.)

Giles begins his book on Wall Street. Dutch Schultz and the gangs had moved in after Prohibition went out. They were looking for easy money and what more choice place to find it than in the small-loan racket. Story after story went into the District Attorney's office showing how clerks on small salaries were being beaten up by gangsters because they had become delinquent in their loans to the mobsters. The gangs had divided the city up into areas of prey.

When Dewey finally broke the rackets it was the small loan that came first.

The author shows the terrifying interlocking of crooked politicians, loan companies and gangsters in those days. The long struggle against illegal lending companies and the campaign to restrict by law extortionate rates of interest are given with many revealing incidents. But the author paints a whole picture. It isn't a caricature. He gives the loan companies their due and is constantly fair and undogmatic in his conclusions, letting the anecdotes and statistics speak for themselves.

The problem of credit for the wage earner is easy to explain, but the solution requires deep thought and courageous action. Giles outlines the growth of the credit-union movement in Canada and the United States. On the question of installment buying, he shows unmistakably its power in making available the products of industry to a wide variety of people.

He describes the work of the Russell Sage Foundation in trying to help persons in desperate financial trouble. Much space is given to Desjardins and also to Edward Filene of Boston who spent so much of his time, energy and money to foster the movement. Two Massachusetts men whose efforts are also largely responsible for the spread of credit unions are likewise recognized—Roy Bergengren and Pierre Jay.

The extension work of St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, out of which grew the great co-operative endeavors of Eastern Canada, is described in detail.

A letter Giles received when he proposed to write this book sums up the spirit of devotion of credit-union pioneers. An officer of a local credit union said:

"I have lived through the depression of the early thirties here in North Dakota when field men from the so-called Barn Yard Loan outfit came in my yard and counted my sheep, to see if perchance I had butchered and eaten one without permission. Those were hard times. I hope and pray that they may not come again. Meanwhile we are building our credit unions and our co-operatives as rapidly and as safely and strongly as possible in the hope that our whole economy will be strengthened....

"The other day a young man came into our office and wanted to borrow a thousand dollars to buy a trailer house. He said, 'I'm going to be married Sunday and I must have a house for my bride.' It was a good loan. The man had a steady job and security enough, but we did not have the money on hand to help him. So the credit committee regretfully told him he would have to wait until we got more cash.

"He left and in half an hour was back and another man was with him, who turned out to be the owner of the trailer house. The owner said he would deposit a thousand dollars if we would loan the money to the young fellow so he could buy his trailer house and pay him off. So the deal was consummated . . . and everybody was happy.

"I think happenings like this are common in credit-union operations; to me they mean a step forward in understanding of the dignity of the individual and the necessity of preserving that dignity."

ARTHUR SHEEHAN

BOOK NOTES

Newman Bookshop has reprinted, with a bright red cover, the *Catechism of the "Summa Theologica"* ($2.75) by R. P. Thomas Pegues, O.P., which is a small handy reference to Saint Thomas' work, in catechetical form. Many is the time we've seen a priest reach for this book to put his finger quickly on a right answer. So we've tried pulling the same thing ourselves in the office since this book came in; the catch is, as we immediately discovered, that the order presupposes you know your way around the *Summa.*

Designs for Christian Living, that liturgical mail-order house in Kansas City, Mo. (Box 5948, Westport Station) sent us some liturgical postcards (some Christmas-y, some Easterish, some useful at any time) which retail at 5¢ each. It's a new idea, sort of first cousin to all those nice bookmarks that spread so phenomenally. The same place will have its new catalog (50¢) out this month, showing all its wares.

Very few people are acquainted with *The Thinker's Digest,* a thirty-page quarterly which reproduces (in condensed form) articles and fiction of merit. Sister Miriam, R.S.M. of College Misericordia does the apostolic searching out, and the students at the college do the digesting. The selection is discerning and preserves material which originally appeared in *Blackfriars, The Month,* and other first-quality sources. Sister Miriam is the editor of *The Spoiled Priest,* an anthology of short stories and sketches (somewhat abridged) which formerly had been reprinted in *The Thinker's Digest.* Some of the best of modern fiction is represented in it (*The Spoiled Priest and Other Stories,* P. J. Kenedy and Sons, $3.50).

Our Writers

ERNST AND JOHANNA WINTER are a young married couple living in Shanks Village (a barrack settlement near New York City) and active in the marriage apostolate. Ernst teaches at Iona College. ARTHUR SHEEHAN and ELIZABETH M. SHEEHAN are also husband and wife. Arthur is one of the organizers of the credit union at CARE, and has published a pamphlet on the subject. We've published Betty's material

before, both prose and poetry, sometimes using her maiden name, Odell. (She and Arthur met in St. Michael's all-Irish Russian choir in New York.) DOROTHY DOHEN, who works closely with the lay apostolate in New York, is the author of *Vocation to Love.* PETER MICHAELS is an INTEGRITY editor. AUTOLICUS, reviewer of *Neuroses and Sacraments,* is a psychiatrist with twenty years experience in private and institutional practice. As he indicates, the book is radically different from the usual one on neuroses. It takes as its norm for human beings the likeness of Christ. We had an article by Father Keenan in last month's INTEGRITY, and plan to run another very soon. ALICE VISLOCKY belongs to the Catholic Evidence Guild that does soap-box oratory for the Church in New York City.

BY WHAT STANDARD . . .

The criterion by which a book club must be judged is its selections. We believe the high quality of the selections of the Thomas More Book Club—such books as **Cardinal Suhard's GROWTH OR DECLINE?, Thomas Merton's SEVEN STOREY MOUNTAIN, HELENA** by **Evelyn Waugh, THE MARY BOOK** assembled by **Frank Sheed, THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST** by **Jules Lebreton, S.J.**—make it consistent with the highest standards.

In the months to come, the selections will continue in this same tradition of quality books that reflect Catholic principles. **THE WEEK WITH CHRIST** by **Emeric Lawrence, O.S.B.,** a February selection, is a meditative and thought-provoking explanation of each of the Sunday Masses in the light of their social aspects and their relationship to the apostolate of Catholic Action.

Light and gay, but giving an insight into the life of the parish priest is another selection, **EVERYBODY CALLS ME FATHER** by the anonymous **Father X,** a young priest in a small mid-western town.

For March we have chosen what we believe will be one of the great Catholic books of our day—**THE PILLAR OF FIRE** by **Karl Stern,** a Jewish psychiatrist who found Truth in the Catholic Church precisely because he was true to his Jewishness and to the demands of his science.

Other books chosen as future selections are **Gertrud von Le Fort's SONG OF THE SCAFFOLD, THE EAR OF GOD** by **Father Patrick Peyton** and **THE GOSPEL OF ST. PAUL** by **Msgr. Ronald Knox.**

If you would like further information about the Thomas More Book Club, just drop a card to

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